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Government to train more POL teachers in national-type schools

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Government will train more teachers for Pupils' Own Language classes in national-type schools to encourage more Chinese and Indian students to attend these schools.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the teaching of non-Bumiputera languages was provided for and encouraged by the Government.

"We are going to train more teachers. This is one country in Southeast Asia, the only country in Southeast Asia, perhaps the only country in the world where the languages of the non-Bumiputeras are actually provided for and encouraged by the Government," he told reporters after a Barisan Nasional pre-council meeting with BN MPs and senators at Parliament House.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, was asked earlier about the Government's view towards having a single-medium school system as proposed by various quarters to enhance national unity.

He said it was the Government's hope that Chinese and Indian students would go to national-type schools.

"But unfortunately national-type schools now are controlled by those who try to make the national schools look like Islamic religious schools and this makes Chinese and Indians not interested in going to national-type schools even though we have agreed to have POL teachers.

"We did not supply POL teachers not because it is Government policy. No, it just became so," Dr Mahathir said.

He said in having POL classes, the Government would ensure that Muslim students did not force non-Muslim students to accept their way of living including forcing non-Muslims to wear the tudung and the like.

"So we make the national-type school more attractive. I believe that many students who go to Chinese and Indian schools would like to go to national-type schools where they will get the same education as well as learn their mother tongue.

"And there is no pressure that they must accept the manner and custom and the way of living of Muslims," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked if the Vision Schools concept could be a solution to the matter, he said the Government had proposed it but politicians made it an issue.

"Whatever we proposed, they make a political issue and they bring in racial elements that make a small matter big," Dr Mahathir said.

He said no development would take place if the Opposition was to be followed.

Citing as an example the Muda irrigation scheme, Dr Mahathir said the Opposition had objected, saying land too had to be rested for six months before re-planting.

"No need to plant padi twice a year and people cannot work throughout the year," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the Opposition's logic was followed there would be no Muda scheme, no Kelantan irrigation scheme, and no Penang bridge.

"Whenever we want to do something we are opposed by the Opposition who feel that as the Opposition, they must oppose everything."

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